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CONTENTS

September 1956, (Vol. 28, No. 1)

| | | |
|---|-----------|----|
| O Glorious Virgin Ever Bless'd | - - - | 1 |
| <i>Tr. Rev. Roger Schoenbechler, O.S.B.</i> | | |
| St. Ignatius and Our Lady | - - - - - | 2 |
| <i>Rev. W. J. Young, S.J.</i> | | |
| Modes of Presence | - - - - - | 4 |
| <i>Rev. James O'Mahoney, O.F.M.Cap.</i> | | |
| Digne, Attente et Devote | - - - - - | 8 |
| <i>Rev. Bruno M. Hagspiel, S.V.D.</i> | | |
| Loving the Father | - - - - - | 11 |
| <i>L.M.W.</i> | | |
| Convent Queries | - - - - - | 16 |
| <i>Rev. Winfrid Herbst, S.D.S.</i> | | |
| Biggest Today | - - - - - | 23 |
| <i>Rev. Frank J. Sullivan</i> | | |
| The Convent Book Shelf | - - - - - | 26 |

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O GLORIOUS VIRGIN EVER BLESS'D

Following is a new translation by Rev. Roger Schoenbechler, O.S.B., of the hymn for Lauds on feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This English version has been written in the same meter as the Latin and can be sung to the Gregorian melody given in the Liber Usualis.

O glorious Virgin, ever bless'd,
Thou Crown of perfect maidenhood!
The Infant Saviour at thy breast
Thy love receiv'd with earthly food.

What man had lost through sinful Eve,
By Virgin birth thou didst restore:
That man might grace anew receive
And entry gain to heaven's door.

Thou Gate, through which hath pass'd the King!
Thou Hall, with God's own splendor bright!
Let nations long thy praises sing,
For thou didst give them Life and Light!

O Jesus, glory be to Thee,
Thou Virgin Mary's only Son,
And praise to God the Father be,
To Holy Spirit, Three in One.

ST. IGNATIUS AND OUR LADY

By W. J. Young, S.J.
West Baden College
West Baden Springs, Indiana

On July 31st, last, the Society of Jesus drew to a close the celebrations which marked the four hundredth anniversary of the death of its founder, St. Ignatius. During these four hundred years the character of the saint has grown to full stature and his place firmly established, not only in the history of the Church throughout this period, but his influence has spread over the world, and he has come to be recognized by friend and foe alike as one of the outstanding figures of history.

Readers of *Sponsa Regis*, however, would most probably be interested rather in a restricted view of the saint's activity and wish to fix their attention on an aspect of his life that is seldom touched upon with any great emphasis, except in very special studies or very detailed biographies. I refer to his devotion to our Blessed Lady.

Previous to his conversion in 1521, there is little to indicate that he had any more devotion to Our Lady than what was common to the Spaniard of his day. But once he determined to order his life to the praise, reverence and service of God, Our Lady begins to play a major part in his supernatural experiences. We are told by himself that, as he lay almost at the point of death, "Being awake one night, he clearly saw a likeness of Our Lady with the Infant Jesus. During a considerable space of time he received an excess of consolation. There remained so great a disgust with all his past life, especially with its impurity, that he thought that all the impressions which up to then had been so engraved on his soul were torn out." It might be well to remember that the account of this vision was given by the saint himself a few years before his death, and his own conviction, that it was a genuine vision and not the creation of a sick man's overwrought imagination, should carry with it a guarantee that it was indeed Our Lady who appeared to him.

We might almost say that this was the beginning of his devotion to Our Lady, or we might say, the beginning of Our Lady's devotion to St. Ignatius, seeing that in the new life he had resolved upon it was she who took the initiative. And he is not slow to respond. She will appear again and again in his life, but not until he has formally and publicly professed himself her declared and faithful liegeman, a profession which took place in the great Benedictine Monastery of Montserrat on the night of the 24-25 of March, 1522.

The watch of arms at Montserrat is an example of the simplicity and forthrightness of a soldier's devotion. For Ignatius, we might say that it marks the climax of the first stage of his conversion from a warrior of the world to a warrior at war against the world — a complete rightabout face. And as it marked the end of one stage, it also opened up the way to another. We are told that "a bath, a vigil, Confession, Communion, the blessing, and the surrender of his sword were the rites and ceremonies by which the creation of a new knight was effected." Here surely was a new knight, whose soul was bathed in the waters of penance after a Confession that lasted three days. His purification was sealed by the absolution pronounced over him, and the vigil lasted the whole night through. There was much indeed to be sorry for; there were great plans to formulate; he had a lifetime of neglect to repair and a lifetime of opportunity to prepare to utilize. How all this was to be done, he could have had little if any foresight, except that he would walk in the footsteps of Him who on this night, fifteen centuries earlier, the divine Word, in order to free the world, had secretly descended to the humility of the flesh through the cooperation of a Virgin who wished to be merely the handmaid of the Lord. How appropriately, then, he stood there at the feet of this Lady of pure love, in the obscurity of her sanctuary, garbed like a poor man, an unknown pilgrim of the earth, where he no longer had any fixed place of abode, nowhere to lay his head. The arms, which up to now had ministered only to his vanity, he left at her feet. Henceforth he wished no other buckler than that of faith, no other helmet than that of salvation, no other sword than the sword of the Spirit. And in the fervor of his prayer,

he begged Our Lady's aid in putting on the armor of the Christian, which is Christ.

The secrets of that blessed night he never revealed. There are those, however, who claim to find in certain passages of the *Spiritual Exercises* swift glimpses of self-revelation, which may well have had their first beginnings in the reflections of this blessed night, this watch of arms at the feet of Our Lady of Montserrat.

There seems to be a special appropriateness in this man of action, whose sons were to roam the entire world in their quest for souls, finding his first inspiration in this mountain solitude, which for centuries before Ignatius and almost unceasingly since has re-echoed with the chant of its monks, and been made fragrant with the prayers of its solitaries — in this warrior going forth from the peace he breathed at Our Lady's feet to wage a never-ending war, a war in which quarter is neither asked nor given, against the forces of evil, for the greater glory of God.

MODES OF PRESENCE

By Father James, O.F.M.Cap.
Cork, Ireland

When the Evangelists undertook to conserve for posterity the sayings and doings of our blessed Lord, they had no intention of painting a portrait of Him. Their aim was to set down, with a great economy of words, their experience of Him. Looking back upon their lives, and this is particularly true of the beloved disciple, they could see that authentic existence began for them the day on which, surrendering to the mysterious attraction of Jesus, they were privileged to live in intimacy with Him. However we describe that day of their conversion, or what led up to it, it must be recognised that a friendship with Him was born, which was destined to have a life of its own. How that life of friendship would develop, through what vicissitudes it would pass, what it would reveal of Him or of themselves, only the future could tell.

It is certain that this experience, wherein the Master and disciples were united in a common destiny, was one of the most significant things ever granted by God to men on earth. It is an experience which is revealing; it is a thing of timeless value; and it has an imperishable message for the education of every Christian soul. Once it is sympathetically examined, bringing to bear upon it that penetration which only the Spirit of Christ Himself can grant, it becomes a source of light for the understanding of different modes of Presence. Three distinct modes of Presence can be discerned, as the experience developed through its successive phases; and it is as well to set them down as trenchantly as possible.

There is, first, the physical Presence of the Master to their external senses, when they could see Him with their eyes and touch Him with their hands. The second mode of Presence began for them on the morning of the Resurrection, when they had to seek Him in a different world, to which the illumination of faith alone could give them access. But of all the modes of Presence, the most intimate began only at Pentecost when, united to Him in the Spirit, they found Him at the very centre of their being. The progress from a Presence to sense, in which (without faith) He could be absent, to the invisible Presence in a world where their senses were "held", so that they might not recognise Him, is very clear. Not less clear is the progress that took place at Pentecost when, no longer in the world around them, but within the circle of their own being, they were aware of His Presence.

This progress is clearly delineated in the Gospels, because there is not a single mode of these distinct types of Presence that is not marked by its own special crisis. The end of the first period came with His death on Calvary, when their faith was utterly disconcerted; the end of the second period was marked by His visible disappearance at the Ascension; the third period began at Pentecost, and it could have no other normal ending save the beatific vision itself, when He would finally reveal Himself to them as He really is. It would seem, in fact, that the theme of the Saviour's thoughts was precisely this progressive knowledge of Him. At the Last Supper He taunted them with their little knowledge of Him; He spoke to them of the necessity for His departure; He held out to them the promise of an even greater

intimacy with Him. Whether they realised it then or not, He was making known to them a law which governs the relations of God to man, in virtue of which He must conceal Himself if He is to be revealed.

The physical Presence of the Master concealed Him; and there were many who did not recognise Him for what He was. The Apostles ultimately did, because faith was given to them, and in faith there is that freedom which love demands. But their minds in which the light from heaven began its illumination were filled with false ideas; and these had gradually to disappear. When He died upon the Cross, thus falsifying their ambitious hopes of a worldly kingdom, He had struck at the false ideas that were coming between them. The removal of His physical Presence, perilous as He knew it to be, prepared them for increased illumination. But it was only at Pentecost that their minds were finally filled with light when, in His possession of them, He gave them proof of what He had said to them in the course of His earthly ministry: "I am the light of the world. . . ."

It is wonderful to watch this progressive appreciation of the Master, which is not without a certain parallel in the natural order of things. If we accept the principle that grace perfects nature, without destroying it, we shall not be surprised at this. Human knowledge begins with the senses. But the senses do not give the mind access to the inner essence or meaning of things. For this the added power of the intellect is needed. But the intellect itself must pass through successive phases, before it can know things as they really are. In this progress there is the necessity of rising above the senses, and beyond imagination itself, until the intellect enters in within itself, if it is to appreciate the significance of the real in the light of the ultimate idea of being as being. It is this idea which leads the mind to discern in things, in their deepest depths, the presence of a creative Cause. But we do know that such a vision is possible only in maturity; and even then those minds are few which enjoy it.

This is only a parallel, however interesting it may be, because faith opens up dimensions of the Real to which natural reason has no access. But it is a parallel which is instructive. The reason is that the reality of things, in the intimacy of its mysterious

existence, cannot be known until the intellect is prepared to rise above sense and imagination, sacrificing them if needs be, in its attempt to bring its knowledge into harmony with things. The man who prefers his own ideas of reality to what the real itself demands of the mind, is bound to fail. He must accept reality, consent to it, in fact, if he is to hear the message which it is endeavouring to convey. Even in the natural order the real cannot be a presence, or announce the mystery of a Pure and Total Presence, unless a man is ready to empty his mind of prejudice, of preconceived ideas, and of mere images, which do duty for ideas which alone can serve to identify the mind with the mystery of being. Could men but realise it, the world is a gift and an invitation to the knowledge of a Pure Presence which is that of the living God.

The difference between the order of nature and the order of grace, however, is an abysmal one. This difference the Apostles were destined to learn in their experience of our blessed Lord. It would not be too much to say that the difficulty for them, as indeed for us, was that of understanding the mystery of a Love, which gradually revealed themselves to themselves as of infinite value in the sight of a Master who came to them in that "I" and "Thou" relationship, which was so characteristic a feature of their life in common. He willed to ask Peter whether Peter loved Him, and Peter was embarrassed by the question, though he should not have been, already knowing something of what love signifies. What the Apostles encountered in their Master was the presence and reality, in this world, of a personal Love beyond all human expectation, and were they not the humble men they were, they could never have accepted it. For if love is in a man the thing in which he is most personal, the Apostles found themselves in presence of the human love of Jesus, which was the sign and sacrament of a love that was literally divine, the love of the eternal Word Himself.

DIGNE, ATTENTE ET DEVOTE

By Bruno M. Hagspiel, S.V.D.
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Imagine the impression it must have made upon the Apostles, when they beheld their divine Master so recollected in prayer. We may hardly ever expect to find elsewhere that high degree of self-detachment from all exterior things, that sublime devotion of our divine Model and Exemplar. We must remember that He could not be distracted at all because of His hypostatic union. But, no doubt, it must have been most edifying to look upon Him in His perfect concentration in His prayerful conversation with His heavenly Father.

Among the saints of God there were but few who were so recollected in prayer, so absorbed in their conversation with God, that they were hardly ever distracted. Indeed, the most of our canonized and uncanonized saints had to fight during their whole lives with numerous distractions during prayer. Once St. Augustine, during the preaching of a sermon in Hippo, confessed before his entire audience the difficulty he had to say his daily prayers with attention and devotion. He concluded his humble admissions by calling upon God to witness: "Thou knowest, O Lord, how great is my desire to do better than I am actually doing. Truly, time and again I am obliged to realize how weak and frail I am. . . ." Very interesting also is a remark of another Doctor of the Church, *St. Thomas of Aquin*, who probably out of his own experience states: "No pious person can say even one whole *Our Father* without being molested with distractions of one kind or another. . . ." Don't you believe it? Try then to recite at once the Lord's Prayer as piously as you possibly can. I assure you that you will be molested at least with this one distraction that you do not want to be distracted.

Let us therefore refuse to become impatient upon finding ourselves harassed and assaulted by distractions. *Father Chaignon*, S.J., author of numerous meditation books for priests, makes the following startling remark, which will, I am sure, be of great

consolation to all religious reading this article: "If you find yourselves able to feel quite blissful and content in the presence of God for even three to five minutes during the week, do not fail to look upon this as a great grace." Don't you think that you and most of our Sisters are doing better than that?

As long as our distractions are not deliberate, the kind in which we catch ourselves, as we say, we should never be perturbed about them and should not confess them. It is different, when they have been deliberately intended or entertained, for then they must be considered a disrespect to the divine Majesty, or to the saint to whom we were praying. Our good Catholic people, and especially our religious, who worry so much about their distractions, should be accordingly instructed as to the proper policy in the matter. Too many of our religious are making a great mistake by mentioning distractions in prayer mechanically as the staple of their weekly Confessions. Not being aware of anything very much wrong that happened otherwise during the week, they heave a sigh of relief, saying to themselves: "Oh, there is always distraction to confess; that makes a good start..." and they feel more comfortable and relieved that they can confess at least that much. Such policy, I fear, has often all the earmarks of mechanical routine or mediocrity, if not even tepidity. After all, deliberate distractions in prayer are or ought to be very rare among religious.

However, let us admit that we all could do far better than we actually are doing, i.e., we all can pray with greater attention and devotion:

First of all, we must definitely remove the obstacles, everything that by its nature is apt to cause distractions. I imagine it would be impossible to recite the Office or the Rosary or any other prayer attentively and devoutly in the presence of companion Sisters carrying on a conversation, or with the canary bird singing joyfully, or with the radio being on with full blast, or with somebody playing on the piano some of the popular songs.

Secondly, from the very beginning of our prayer we must take a proper posture and maintain it throughout the entire recitation of the Office or any other prayer. While it is impossible to bring our imaginative faculties under complete control, we have a

perfect command over our outward senses, our limbs, our head, our knees and our hands, and thus we are able to manifest our sincere respect and homage towards Our Lord. As for the liturgical rites of the Mass and the administration of the Sacraments, holy Church has herself minutely regulated every detail, and this fact ought to show us how much service is offered to God when we lay stress upon presenting ourselves before the Lord in correct bodily posture.

Thirdly, we must never rush into prayer, especially when about to begin longer periods of prayer, but make first a kind of proximate preparation by definitely putting aside all thoughts of work or play, etc., and by turning our thoughts heavenward. Is not that the purpose of taking holy water, as we enter the church, thus parting with any kind of disturbing or distracting daydreaming? A good many of the religious Franciscan families (like the 4,500 Felician Sisters in the U.S.A.) imitate even today their holy Father St. Francis of Assisi, who on entering a church or chapel with his companions would jointly make a prostration, saying: "We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee, for through Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world!" That was their proximate preparation for prayer. On my travels in pagan lands I found that even the pagans would often go through some preparatory exercise before entering a temple to pray; e.g., in the courtyard of the best of pagan temples in Japan there is a fountain with running water; there they wash their hands, so as to appear before their deities with clean hands. And as they enter the temple, they ring with one stroke a little bell hanging at the door, so as to call the god's attention to the fact that they wish to have a prayerful talk with the respective deity. Does it not remind us of our own very proximate preparation at the beginning of every Hour of the Office, when we pray: "*Deus, in adiutorium meum intende...*"?

Fourthly, we must above all make every effort to avoid mechanical or parrotlike recitation of our Office or any of the other daily prayers. We are intellectual beings, and as such we owe to God Almighty a "servitium rationabile", especially during our daily Mass and in the recitation of the Divine Office, those two outstanding liturgical exercises, in which we appear before God as official representatives of holy Church. And Oh, how

much more devout would not all our prayers be, if we were more conscious of our own misery and our needs on the one hand, and on the other hand of God's omnipotence and eagerness to come to our aid.

Loving The Father

“If you want to be a saint, Sister, I can give you no better motto to hold than this: ‘Love God. Imitate Him. Follow Him to the Crucifixion.’ Do this and you will become a saint.” (Rev. John Zeller, C.S.S.R.)

To how many others this holy priest gave the same advice I do not know. But through the years, as this motto has been reflected upon and repeated in moments of trial and temptation, it has assumed new and further meaning, until such realization has taken on outline form and has pleaded to be put into writing through one of my dearest associates.

“Not every one who says, ‘Lord, Lord!’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven,” Jesus proclaimed as He came near the end of His Sermon on the Mount, “but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 7:21). From the very beginning of His preaching Jesus wanted the people to understand clearly that love was not a thing that knew proclamation only in words. It has to be shown in deeds. Over and over He reiterated this fact. “I am the way and the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me” (Jo. 14:6). “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. And he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father: and I will love him and manifest myself to him” (Jo. 14:21). “But that the world may know I love the Father: and as the Father hath given me commandments, so do I” (Jo. 14:31).

In God there are three Persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We love them as our Trinity, our Creator who made us to their own image. “Let us make man to our own image and likeness” (Gen. 1:26). And yet for each Person there abides in our souls a special, co-equal love.

WE LOVE THE FATHER. He is our Father whom we cannot address without the thought of eternity. From all eternity

He destined us as His special children. He prepared the setting for our parentage, our birth, our rebirth at Baptism, when we became truly His children, members of His Church, one with His eternal Son in the Mystical Body. In His loving Providence He gave us an angel, a special angel, a Guardian to watch us and guide us and help us to be good, to combat for us and with us against the spirit of evil, to chide us if we fall, and to bring us back repentant to our Father's arms. He brought with Him at Baptism the Spirit of Love, reciprocating Love of the Father for the Son, of the Son for the Father. He poured into our souls the theological virtues of faith and hope and charity, which under the impelling force of the Holy Spirit and the Word were to grow in our souls and make us more fully His children. Our Father it was who destined us to be the chosen brides of His Son, the chosen lovers of His Spirit. His goodness compasses us; His justice draws us; His mercy makes tender appeal to us; His power overshadows us; His wisdom impels us. We look to Him ever as the most tender and loving Father. Glancing back over the episodes of our life, we see that He, in spite of our numerous fears of what might happen, has arranged all things so that eventually they worked for our greatest good, they served to draw us closer to Him, they proved to call forth thanksgiving that He had acted in our regard according to His wisdom, not according to our petty whims and fancies.

Surely after all these years, we can do no less than beg Him, our Father, to do with us according to His will. This sentiment of complete dependence, growing into loving subjection, and finally into holy abandonment, is our reciprocating answer to His love. It is love which has its source in Him, finds its increase through our participation in divine sonship, and our response to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and results finally in the giving back to Him entirely, unreservedly, unconditionally, irrevocably, our whole mind, our whole soul, our whole heart, our entire being.

This love for our God our Father must find expression. We give that expression verbally, as we render the prayer of the Word, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.” But we know that expression in word without action is nil. True love must give; true love must sacrifice. Yes, but what have we to give? What have we to sacrifice? Of ourselves nothing! In Christ, everything! It is by Christ and with Him, in Christ and through Him that we give, because we are His members. As His members, His gift is ours; His supreme, His perfect Gift is ours; His renewed Sacrifice of Himself in our daily Mass is ours. On Calvary Christ sacrificed Himself as He then was, in His physical Body. Today He sacrifices Himself as He now is, in His glorified Body under the Signs in His Mystical Body. We claim membership in that Body as given us in Baptism. Therefore, in the holy Sacrifice we must not forget to give ourselves and the other members of this Body. At the Offertory, as the priest raises the paten that holds the white bread, soon to become the Body of Jesus, we place the offering of ourselves upon the paten — all the little actions we have done between holy Masses in accordance with His will, all the joys with which He has so generously inebriated our souls, all the sorrows that we have been privileged to unite to His sorrows, all our work, all our play, all with which each separate moment has been filled. Together with the wine we again offer everything — not only what is ours through our membership in His Body, but what is ours through the membership of all those others who through Baptism are incorporated into Him. All these gifts, insignificant in themselves, now united with the gifts of bread and wine, are symbolic of our love. We plead: “In the spirit of humility and with a contrite heart receive us, O Lord, and grant that the sacrifice we offer this day in Thy sight, may be pleasing unto Thee, O Lord God.” Then, turning to the Holy Spirit, we plead for His blessing upon our offering, “Come, O Sanctifier, Almighty and Eternal God, and bless this sacrifice prepared for Thy holy Name.”

At the Consecration Christ takes our offerings, symbolic of our giving love and, through His power exercised in the priesthood, puts His value into them. From an almost valueless offering they become the infinitely precious Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. And with the priest we offer to our Father the perfect Gift of His own Son and render unto Him perfect worship. With

Christ the High Priest, with the ordained priest at the altar, with the other members of the Mystical Body, we offer the Victim to God. "Wherefore, O Lord, we Thy servants and likewise Thy holy people, calling to mind the blessed Passion of the same Christ Thy Son our Lord, and also His resurrection from hell and also His glorious Ascension into heaven, offer unto Thy most excellent Majesty, of Thy gifts and presents, a pure Victim, a holy Victim, a spotless Victim, the holy Bread of eternal life and the Chalice of everlasting salvation." "Through Him, and with Him, and in Him, be unto Thee, O God the Father Almighty, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory, world without end. Amen."

After the Consecration we, united to the Victim and offered with Him to the eternal Father, recite the *Our Father* and know that our love is soul-love, not merely lip-love. As we pray "Our Father", it is with an appeal of our soul that all may know God as the tender, loving, compassionate Father whom we know. It is with a deep sense of our own unworthiness that we call Him Father. It is with a depth of gratitude that knows expression only in silent adoration. It is with an insatiable longing to share with Mary and all the saints and angels that eternal happiness of sonship in Christ in our true home, heaven.

"Hallowed be Thy Name" is an appeal that all peoples of all times and places may breathe God's holy Name with awe and reverence. It is a plea in reparation for all those who ever have or will transgress the commandment, "Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain." It is a call to all members of Christ to form with us a schola of praise, that may draw down upon our world the peace of Christ.

As we utter the words "Thy Kingdom come", our souls long for the spread of God's rule over all souls. We would desire that the love, the peace, the joy that comes in complete surrender of self to the Father might penetrate to every remote corner of the globe and bring about the fulfillment of the promise of Christ, "There shall be one fold and one shepherd."

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." "Father", we plead, "grant us, grant all of us, to say and mean with Mary, Fiat." Grant us the complete abandonment manifested by the saints all down the eons of years. Grant us, when we know

Thy will, to act quickly and surely as do all the inhabitants of heaven.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” Give us Jesus, Thy Son, in holy Communion. In Him whom we have offered unto Thee in adoration, thanksgiving and propitiation, grant the speedy fulfillment of our petition: “That all may be one.”

Forgive us, Father. Forgive us all the sins of our lives. Grant us true sorrow in true love. We fear, Our Father, the loss of heaven, because we have so often deserved it. But we fear more lest we offend Thee, our loving Father, so munificent in Thy gifts, so tender in Thy merciful forgiveness. Forgive us, forgive Thy sinful world. Lead all back to Thy feet, so that humbly prostrate prodigal sons, proclaiming our unworthiness to be called Thy children, we may be received into Thy arms. Mercifully clothe us in the garment of sanctifying grace and command that the ring of friendship be ours. Forgive us, Father, and teach us the lesson of Thy unbounded love, so that we as individuals, as cities, as states, as nations, may grant reciprocal forgiveness to each other. “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

“Lead us not into temptation.” Father, permit not that we listen to the enticements of the world, of the flesh, of satan. Deliver us from the evil of sinning against Thee. We want only Thy love, only Thy grace, only Thy will. Amen, Father. So be it with us and with all Thy children now and forever. Amen.

As our loving Father manifests His pleasure at our Gift of His Son and shares with us the Gift we have given Him, by giving us His Son in holy Communion, let us beg that we may be changed, changed entirely, changed perfectly, transformed into Christ our Head. Let us ask for that transparency of soul through which Christ shines out upon our brethren. Zundel fittingly quotes Pere Condren, “We should go to holy Communion in obedience to the desire of Jesus Christ to receive us into Himself, into His life and being... transforming us into what He is; namely, life, love, truth, virtue for God, and also in obedience to His will, to have us for members, in whom He may live to His Father” (Zundel, Maurice, *The Splendour of the Liturgy*, footnote p. 184).

Offering to our Father this holy Sacrifice every day, uniting our actions to the holy Sacrifice being offered throughout the

world millions of times, surely we must grow in holiness and in love. Growing daily in this union with our Head, praying daily with Him "that all may be one", we may confidently hope to say with Him at last, in spirit and in truth, "My God, I love You." "I have finished the work you have given me to do" (Jo. 17:4). "Into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46).

By L. M. W.

Convent Queries

By Winfrid Herbst, S.D.S.
Divine Savior Seminary,
Lanham, Maryland

As regards poverty, what is meant by saying that a religious should not have anything superfluous?

Though there are slightly different enumerations of the degrees of poverty, we may say that the first (lowest) degree of poverty is found in the religious who does not accept, retain, or dispose of anything temporal without the permission of superiors, and who does not keep for his private use anything that is superfluous. The second degree is found in him who also cheerfully bears the privations and hardships inseparably connected with genuine poverty. The third degree consists in not only patiently bearing these privations and hardships, but in even seeking them and in gladly availing oneself of the occasion of practicing religious poverty.

The notion of the superfluous is rather fluid. Most Constitutions caution against superfluity, luxury, and comfort. By superfluity we mean all that is not necessary or useful. We might extend this to all that one could easily do without, even if one has a use for it.

What is superfluous for the members of one religious Order is not necessarily so for the members of another. There are apparent and real differences between the poverty of the Franciscans, Benedictines, Trappists, Jesuits, the Little Sisters of the Poor, the Religious of the Sacred Heart, to mention only a few.

This is nothing to cause surprise. The poverty of Christ is "too rich" not to offer many aspects for the consideration of men, depending upon the time or place from which they view it. In part, the conceptions of modern religious are governed by the geographical, economic, psychological, and spiritual circumstances which accompany them. The European way of practicing poverty, even in a given Order, may be considerably different from the American way. This may even result in a fraternal conflict of views. But even the wisdom of Rome considers what one text calls "moderate comfort" compatible with the strictest obligations.

Of the three vows of religion, that of poverty admits of by far the greatest variations in practice. It has always been thus. In the same Congregation there are gradations in the manner of practicing the same vow of poverty, as one learns when transferred to another country and, above all, to another continent.

Again, of the three vows of religion, that of poverty is certainly the least known, the most easily forgotten, and, therefore, the most frequently infringed; it is usually infringed through ignorance, which is more or less culpable.

We know that every legitimate permission, one that is at once valid and licit, prevents a fault against the vow of poverty; that a permission given without limitation of time (expressed or understood) of itself holds indefinitely; but that any permission can be revoked (suppressed) by the one who gave it, his superior or his successor (Cotel). The reason is because it excludes the act of proprietorship forbidden by the vow. Having permission, the religious acts in dependence upon the superior and so remains true to his vow. A subject should suppose that his superior has a sufficient reason for giving the permission. He may take it for granted that the superior knows what it is permissible for him to grant. But let him remember that any permission obtained by fraud, surprise, or under false pretexts, is equally null and void. The best thing to do is always to act with simplicity, straightforwardness, and sincerity. If a permission is valid but not licit, because it has been granted without sufficient reason, or because it is not in conformity with the religious spirit, one cannot make use of it without committing faults against the virtue of poverty at least.

Such would be the case if a religious would have superfluities with the permission of his Superior. He would not then be at fault for want of leave, or because of exercising proprietorship, but because his spirit of poverty is not what it should be.

All of which brings us back to the vexing problem of what things are to be considered superfluous. Half a dozen pencils, when one would be enough? A typewriter, when used only occasionally? A whole collection of books, for handy reference when needed? Four automobiles, when three would do for the community, though with considerable inconvenience? Mechanical means for the simplification of work in the kitchen, in the laundry, on the farm? Rapid communications by auto, airplane, telephone? Card indexes? Duplicating outfits? Etc., etc., etc. Let prudent, experienced, and zealous superiors decide.

Could you not be more precise about just what is superfluous?

It is hard to be precise about these things. Times change and we, even we religious, change with them. And there are so many enemies of poverty all around: worldliness, contact with the high standard of living in our country, the contagion of bad example, carelessness on the part of superiors, material prosperity of religious houses. Take the U.S.A. in this year 1956. How different life today from the life lived 50 or 60 years ago! Also in religious communities. The saints used to save match sticks. The Little Flower used to gather carefully her pencil shavings.

Let us just imagine a religious who left his house fifty years ago and wandered out into the woods for a bit of "contemplation" — and had a Rip van Winkle sleep. When he left the house the community was fervent in the observance of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Just take the room that had been assigned to him by his superior: a bed, a table and a chair, an old wooden arm chair, a clothes cabinet in one corner, a kerosene lamp, a wood burning stove, an open bookstand with a few necessary books, a picture or two and a crucifix on the wall, little else unless we count the washstand and wash basin.

During the long sleep of fifty years electric light arrived, and central heating, and running water, and all the modern conveniences that we have today. Wandering back from the

woods to the house, the religious found that the city had grown up around the place, that only portions of the old monastery remained, that an entirely new structure had just been completed for the community, which had now grown to seventy-five men, not counting the many who had gone elsewhere to start new foundations. Only a few of the men, now grown strangely old, did he seem to recognize; but all wore the same dear habit. The superior, a stranger with a puzzled expression in his eyes, took him to a room and told him that it would be his. "We have seventy-five in this new section, all alike," he said. What a difference now! It was a fairly large room, with tall windows, fitted out with Venetian blinds. There was a bed, a desk and a chair, a platform rocker, a reading lamp and electric lights suspended from the ceiling in addition, a radiator with steam heat and, instead of the simple washstand with its basin and pitcher and the four-by-six mirror above it (turned over against the wall when not in actual use), there was a section of the room divided off into a toilet, shower, basin with hot and cold running water, surmounted by an eighteen-by-twenty-four mirror that formed the door of a cabinet and could not be turned against anything. Everything was simple enough. And yet, and yet. . . .

There is some consolation in the words of St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi: "We can rest assured as to the salvation of a religious who has everything in abundance, provided that the abundance comes to him through his superiors and that he desires nothing more."

The same cannot be said of the religious who is ill-fed and ill-clothed, but who longs for prosperity. A liberal poverty that is cherished is better than a rigid poverty that is endured with ill grace. And there is consolation, too, in these words of St. Augustine: "God indeed looks not on what one possesses, but on the greed with which one covets."

What might be suggested as a program for a life of poverty?

Pere Chevrier outlines the following program for a life of poverty:

Be content with little.

Waste nothing.

Always think you get more than you deserve.
Be grateful for everything.
Be pleased with all that is done for you.
Complain of nothing, because you love what makes you more like Christ.

Work for your living.
Gladly do the humblest and the lowest things.
Abhor luxury, vanity, comfort, ease, and all that smacks of it.
Be ready to help everybody.
Take care of what you have.
Avoid abundance and extravagance.
Make no unnecessary expenditure for lodging, clothing, food, building, and decoration.
Be economical without being avaricious. Avarice is a vice doubly hateful to a soul dedicated to detachment.

As regards religious obedience, I know that the superior takes the place of God. This poses a real problem, if the superior happens to be self-willed, unwise, imprudent in his commands. What is the answer?

The answer is that when such a command is given by the superior, you unite your mind and will with his to the exact extent to which he commands. It is not necessary that you attain the purpose of the command. For example, a superior appoints you, who know little enough about cooking, as chief cook in the kitchen. Everybody knows that a good chief cook is of great importance. The end, a good chief cook, is not going to be attained by the command. But that is not your affair. Whether the command is dictated by self-will, rashness, imprudence does not matter, as far as you are concerned. The order must be obeyed. You see Christ's command, and that is enough. Who can tell what, in God's eyes, is success or failure, and what does it matter, as far as your obedience is concerned, whether you are the one or the other? He will bless the obedience, even if you cannot see how. Though the superior may be wrong, you can never be wrong in obeying, unless what is commanded is manifestly sinful. Even if the result be failure, God can draw good out of it.

If one literally looks upon the superior as taking the place of God, does that mean that the superior's disapproval is God's disapproval?

Though a superior's disapproval may be a searing trial, one that purifies you and weans you from your purely natural obedience, yet it is not strictly true that the superior's disapproval means God's disapproval. The superior is not the judge of our spiritual state. He takes the place of God in telling us what to do. For example, the superior does not like your way of handling the work in the kitchen, which he assigned to you, though you do the best you can. He disapproves. That does not mean that God disapproves. All you need do is be faithful and patient, trusting God and believing still that He is acting in the superior, as far as that appointment goes. "This is what I am ordered to do. It is God's will for me. I do it. That is all."

And yet, all this is not so simple. There is such a thing as the mystery of obedience. We may know God's will as manifested in the command of the superior, and we may love it; and still we actually feel repugnance in carrying it out. One would think that the infinitely holy Savior would have had no recoil or repugnance from whatever His loving Father willed. And yet, meditate on the words He spoke in the garden: "I am plunged in sorrow, enough to break my heart! Abba, Father, you can do all things! Spare me this cup! No, not what I will, but what you will!" (Mark 14:34,36. Kleist translation.)

We might remember, too, that in blind obedience the blindness only comes in after all due representations have been made. It is sometimes part of the duty of obedience to make representations, and to make them even forcibly on occasion. But then, if the superior nevertheless persists in his command, we are to close our mental ears to contrary reasonings, to look at the matter from the superior's point of view, and to make ourselves well affected towards him.

We should hesitate in calling a superior self-willed, unwise, imprudent, in his commands. It is not the custom to elect such to office. But perhaps God does sometimes want us to have a poor superior in order to use him as an object lesson — to teach us what to do, when we ourselves will be superiors!

What does the state of virginity consist in?

It consists in a union with God in supernatural charity. One who embraces the state of virginity cannot share his love

between God and man. He must give the exclusive love of his heart to God in a complete dedication of himself to God. It is precisely in this undivided and exclusive love, in this complete oblation and dedication to God, that the state of virginity consists. The essential feature of this sacrifice lies in the fact of a complete dedication to God. It is clear that in the eyes of God the keeping of one's love solely for Him far exceeds the sharing of love between God and man.

This does not mean that marriage is contrary to the love of God. God Himself instituted the marriage bond and the divine Savior raised it to the dignity of a Sacrament. The acceptance of the state of virginity implies the recognition of marriage as a good of great value for man. Marriage is also a means for man to reach God, his last End. But of its very nature marriage leads man to man, and only through man to God. But the state of virginity, as such, is orientated by its very nature to union with God in charity. Though one who lives in the state of virginity is not necessarily more perfect than others, because the more perfect soul is the one that has greater charity, whose love for God and neighbor permeates its whole life, yet by reason of its orientation to divine love, the one who lives in the state of virginity is in reality more united to God in proportion to his truly living in this state of virginity.

When God calls souls to virginity, He calls them to be *with Him*, to be joined with Him in a spiritual and supernatural marriage. In a marriage on earth a woman gives herself to her spouse for life, "until death do us part," and keeps her love loyally for her husband. When one chooses virginity, he consecrates himself to God forever and reserves all his love exclusively for God.

Because virginity of its very nature demands a lifelong sacrifice, it is a perpetual sharing of the Cross of Christ. Renouncing the perfection of his social nature, which he would obtain through a human spouse, he seeks his perfection in God, to whom he has given himself in complete oblation and dedication.

Though this union with God is not without sensible consolation, it is nevertheless a union in faith and hope. It is not yet the immediate and perfect possession of God, such as the blessed enjoy in heaven. The giving up of the natural goods

of high value, which are to be found in marriage, without the immediate compensation of the vision of God, is for human nature a difficult and arduous thing.

All this is accepted for the sake of a good of greater value, that is, for the sake of God, *even though* there remain the natural tendency for marriage and for family life, just as in any other normal human being.

The Biggest Today

*Rev. Frank J. Sullivan
Marshfield, Wisconsin*

"TOMORROW," said the priest, concluding his sermon in the convent-chapel, "is nothing more, and nothing less, than all of our yesterdays. And as for today? Well, today is bigger than any of our yesterdays and more important than all our tomorrows. And this is so, because the yesterdays are over and done with, and the tomorrows may never come. All we really have is today."

And what, thought Sister Marlys, does our lifetime consist of, if not this succession of todays. How true, then, to believe sanctity the work of but a moment, *this* moment. A lifetime filled with *this* moments!

"Nothing new under the sun," thought the young Sister, leaving the chapel to go about her appointed rounds; but each day brought a new view of the old truths.

Was it Mom who had said that the day was wasted, indeed, during the course of which nothing new had been added to your knowledge of one or all of three things: life, death or love.

When did sanctity, for her, become a matter of moment? Mentally, a smile touching her lips, Sister Marlys rephrased it, thinking: "A matter of moments, that is."

The call had come early in life, Ellen-Lu remembered, for a moment becoming her former self in pursuit of an answer to the when of her vocation to the Sisterhood. The why she already knew, maybe even without knowing how she knew.

Did the senior prom have anything to do with it, anything at all? Well, in a way, she supposed it had. Despite the thrill that was part of having been voted Prom Queen, there was something hollow about the event. It simply did not satisfy a hunger of which she had grown increasingly aware, as she progressed from childhood to adolescence, a hunger she felt in all of that self now almost arrived at maturity. Ellen was a woman, but there was something of the child about her too. Not so awfully naive, as were so many of her classmates—for which she could thank her parents and the good-sized family of which she was a member. Ellen knew, as well as one of her age and inexperience could be expected to know, the dangers to be found in a world, which casually, unquestioningly, accepted the superficial view of life and seemed to know nothing at all about what life really was.

Always a thinker, her knowledge of life's real meaning was born of her knowledge of her self, a knowledge enlarged by the Catholic faith into which she had been born, a faith fed by the good example of her pious parents. And hers, she had always known, was the truer knowledge. It was the banner-and-tinsel world of proms and pseudo-royalty that was chasing the phantoms, not she. It was they who seemed unable to feed these same hungers, of whose presence she was so intimately aware, and especially so with the band-music sounding in her ear and the sweep of gaily-colored formals whirling before her eyes.

If ever there had been a moment of clarity in her young life, a moment when time had ceased to be and a premonition of eternity been granted her, it was then. Of this Ellen was now certain, though she doubted very much that she could have told you so then. Now, as Sister Marlys, her moods and attitudes, to which the enchantment of time's passage had added a clarity impossible to her at that earlier moment in her pursuit after perfection, could be analyzed in a clear-headed and objective fashion, throwing new light on older truths, bringing to fruition the design of which incidents of such sort had been but the smallest of parts, but nonetheless important. Even little things become highly important, when viewed against the object at which they are aimed. So with such things as the tinsel glamor of the senior prom. So, too, with that sadness that was a part

of the happiness it was natural for her to know.

"I must," Sister Marlys decided, "remind myself, from time to time, of what my life really means." It was, she well knew, deceptively easy to grow careless and permit oneself to forget. It seemed impossible, once upon a time, that one should ever forget, that the religious life was not a denial of self so much as it was a giving to God. Not a purely negative action, this matter of choosing God. Rather, accepting the fact that God has chosen you was the most positive and perfecting action it was possible to anyone to perform. And, surely, the most profitable too.

If only others knew how great was the gain, she found herself thinking, how swiftly would ignorance take flight, and they, too, at least grasp the meaning behind the superficial. How soon, then, would others realize the object at which such seeming sacrifice was aimed?

For ten years, now, Ellen had worn the religious habit and been known by the name of Sister Marlys. And every day of those ten years, each ended almost before it was begun, had deepened her knowledge and love of God. Her hunger was still a very prominent part of her pursuit after perfection; only now, somehow, it was different. Perhaps this, too, had matured. At any rate, when she thought of it, she thought of it in such terms as a "homesickness for heaven", for "here we have no lasting home."

A great love can, and as Sister Marlys knew, did transform mediocrity and add to its stature and worth to a truly phenomenal degree, just as God once had transformed dust and made it splendor, a splendor which could reflect His own glory, having been made "to the image and likeness of God."

Love, the Transformer, had hardened the iron that had always been in her soul and made it steel. And Sister Marlys knew that the dream Ellen-Lu had dared dream had become wondrous reality and this today was the greatest ever.

The Convent Book Shelf

THE PSALMS. The Fides Translation. Introduction by Mary Perkins Ryan. Fides Publishers Association, Chicago 10, Illinois. xxxviii-306 pages, cloth \$3.95.

It would be no exaggeration to describe this as the best popular Psalm book in English published by Catholics in modern times.

Mrs. Ryan's introduction and notes give beginners a solid background for using the Psalms profitably, and even those who are already accustomed to using the Psalter will appreciate the new life and understanding which her clarity and directness furnish. Especially valuable is her understanding of the relationship of the Psalms to Christ's life, and her insistence on the fact that the Psalter is the prayerbook of the Church here and now. In the introduction to each Psalm she suggests how the Church today is in the same situation which occasioned the original composition of the Psalm and, consequently, how the Psalm can be prayed by the Church's members today.

The translation is adequate, although not scholarly. The translator is not named, probably because he is not a Scripture scholar. This anonymity also has the advantage of keeping this Psalter from being thought of as a purely private translation.

Perhaps most gratifying is the fact that these Psalms make good reading in English. The intention was "to provide a clear, modern translation

that gives due attention to the requirements not only of individual reading, but also of recitation aloud and singing," and the attempt was successful. The use of a modern idiom accords with Mrs. Ryan's observations that the Psalms are prayers of the Church today. To read these Psalms one need not retreat into a dreamy unreal world of "Bible English", as is unfortunately the case in such versions as those of Msgr. Knox and Dr. Kissane. A prayerful reading of these Psalms is enough to convince one that a humble expression of God-centered thoughts will suffice to safeguard reverence; there is no need to take refuge in artificial language.

As far as the poetic value of these psalms goes, however, they do not seem to be the final answer to the problem. Most conspicuously, they are marred by occasional hackneyed expressions, like "hale and hearty," and by awkward inversions which apparently are supposed to be "poetical", such as, "Evil you love more than good." The Psalms of course are poetry, but they are not self-conscious poetry. It seems that every time a translation strives to make a poetic impression, instead of letting the poetry watch out for itself, it has failed. However, these defects do not obscure the over-all excellence of the work.

C.T.W.

THE RELIGIOUS VOCATION. By Canon Jacques Leclercq. Translation by the Earl of Wicklow, P. J. Kenedy, 12 Barclay St., New York 8, N. Y. 185 pp. \$3.75.

SPONSA

After reading this book, as after a good retreat, every religious should be dissatisfied with himself. Not meant only for religious, this book should be in the hands of anyone who may be called on to explain just what a religious vocation is. Emphasizing the basic ideas of the call and the gift, Canon Leclercq, himself a priest for thirty years, goes on to discuss in rather brief chapters the three vows, community life, asceticism and recollection, initiative and responsibility, and the priestly vocation.

This book is meant to be a companion volume to his classic, *Marriage and the Family*, and is the greater of the two, since in his own words, he believes "he can say without exaggeration that there is nothing about which he knows more than about the religious vocation, nothing to which he has given more thought, nothing which has held a more important place in his life" (p. 10). The topic is developed along somewhat historical lines. The work lacks much of the unction it might have possessed because of the dearth of direct use of Scripture and the Fathers.

Throughout the chapters the Canon constantly brings back the theme that in the religious life the total gift of self and the seeking of God are basic. Too much of the vocation literature one sees is pointed to the enhancing of the active works of a community. This can be explained by the increasing demands of the active apostolate, but it cannot be excused.

Such statements as, "We must be content to remember that religious obedience is not unconditional," (p. 130) draw one up short until one

captures the "mens auctoris". But others such as, "Mediocrity is indeed regrettable among married people; among the consecrated it really constitutes a scandal" (p. 185), make it one of the first books to take time out for studying the religious vocation as it really is. B.H.

MEDITATIONS BEFORE MASS.
By Romano Guardini. Translated by Elinor C. Briefs. Newman, Westminster, Maryland. 1956. 204 pp. Cloth \$3.00.

Coming at a time when the externals of the liturgy are being enacted with more participation throughout the country, this book is a good reminder that "It is not by bread alone that man lives." It originated as a series of discourses held before holy Mass in order to prepare the worshippers properly for the Sacrifice. Two sections, "Sacred Bearing" and "The Essence of the Mass", make up the volume. The first is a discussion of the attitudes and dispositions necessary to derive the most from this sacrificial worship, while the second deals with the explanation of the Mass itself.

Although Monsignor Guardini's wholeness of approach is in evidence throughout the book, the first part, primarily because it treats of ideas so necessary (yet usually left unsaid), is the most valuable part of the work. His short chapters on composure, silence, the altar, and the sacred act, are well worth the price of this book.

No meditation book in the ordinary sense (some chapters have more than three points), the last section of the book on the essence of the Mass may become a little involved for the untutored mind. B.H.

NO CROSS, NO CROWN. By Rev. Clement H. Crock. Society of St. Paul, 2187 Victory Blvd., Staten Island 14, New York. 1955. 174 pages, cloth \$2.50.

A few weeks ago this reviewer received a communication from a distraught mother. After spinning out her catalog of misfortunes, she concluded by summing it all up; "O well, no Cross, no crown." She had been soul-searching and found some guilt and thus implied that suffering must follow. Fr. Crock in his book helps to dispel the concept that suffering always implies guilt and is a punishment. How else explain the suffering and Sorrows of Mary, the decapitation of the Baptist and the immolation on Calvary?

There are two schools of thought on the problem of suffering. The Christian viewpoint is theocentric and the other anthropocentric. The former seeks the glory of God through revelation and reason; the latter pursues one's own natural happiness and merely increases the problem of suffering. The soldier lays down his life for his flag, his symbol of freedom; the Christian of deep devotion lays down his life for his symbol, the Cross. It was the Cross of Christ that spiritualized all our sufferings and, with proper disposition, supernaturalized them. That is why the Christian speaks of crosses rather than of sufferings. Christ Himself most adequately answered the question on the purpose of suffering when He cured the young man born blind; "Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." Douglas Mallock expresses it in his poetic way:

Courage is to feel

The daily daggers of relentless steel

And keep on living.

In this short work we are taken through the gamut of life, poverty, humiliations, mental desolation, false accusations, physical distress and even death itself. All help to deflate the ego and confirm our dependency upon our Maker. The last chapters are a presentation of the glories that await him who bears his crosses. A rather complete topical index enhances the value of this work.

F.A.W.

THE YEAR AND OUR CHILDREN. By Mary Reed Newland. Kennedy, 12 Barclay St., New York 8, N. Y. 1956. 328 pages, cloth \$3.95.

This book should be as well thumb-ed as the proverbial family cookbook. Coming as a complement to the same author's **We and Our Children**, it joins the ranks of other recent releases striving to bring the liturgy into family life (cf. Florence Berger, Helen McLoughlin, et al.).

Meant to be a family book, it might well fit into any grade school library as ready reference on how to integrate the school party and games into the liturgical year. While reading the section on patron saints, one can't help wondering when the last time was he wished a happy name-day to one of his pupils. This apostolate is still in the stage where little things can mean a lot.

A book of this type can do more for our children than a complete set of encyclopedia on the delinquency problem, for here is where one sees the social graces of the liturgy bearing fruit.

B.H.



Be mindful ⊕ Lord of
Thy Servants and Handmaids

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who are gone before us
with the sign + of faith
and sleep in the sleep
of peace. [Canon of Mass]

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